NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA WOMEN'S TASK FORCE REPORT ON SINGLE INDUSTRY RESOURCE COMMUNITIES

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1974

92-01868/

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I. INTRODUCTION

The attached reports of the Northern British Columbia Women's Task Force on Single Industry Resource Communities are written by women who speak to their own concerns and needs as inhabitants of single industry towns. We have read the documentation of the problems of single industry towns, but, more important, we have experienced them. We are convinced that if there is to be any positive change for women in presently existing single industry communities, and if there is to be any positive developments for women in future communities we must voice our own perceptions of what life is like for us and demand full participation in the planning, governing and evaluating processes.

This is not easy for women to do. We have been taught that our role should lie in the home and that our community involvement should be non-political and non-challenging. We often feel that we do not have the right to question these supportive roles and we have been coerced away from meaningful social action by societal pressures. We learn to believe that our own problems and experiences are not as important as those of men in the public world.

These reports reflect our traditional concerns of home and family. In exploring these concerns we have outlined the difficulty of maintaining a family in a community that women have had no part in planning, and of meeting our own and our children's needs in a community designed for employed male workers. These reports also challenge a system that demands we fill only those traditional roles and at all costs. We share a real concern that unless our experiences are taken into account the development plans of industry and government will continue to deliver programmes that reinforce women's role as marginal, dependent, and unimportant.

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The first thrust of the Task Force, therefore, was to assist and involve women living in Northern British Columbia resource communities in defining the needs of those communities as they relate to women, and to develop techniques that would more effectively identify the problems relevant to women in such communities. These first reports speak to our own experience. We are telling you what it is like for us to live in these towns and we are telling you what changes must be made to make our lives more equitable - more liveable. Our recommendations are made thinking of ourselves and all the other women in single industry communities who are concerned about these issues and want to address them. We intend our reports to provide a basis for community discussion and action.

Northern British Columbia Women's Task Force on Single Industry Resource Communities:

Tamitik Status of Women, Kitimat, B.C.
Gina Baker, Fraser Lake, B.C.
Joan Kotarski, Mackenzie, B.C.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE TASK FORCE

Three separate towns were involved in the Northern B.C. Women's Task Force. They are Kitimat, a twenty-two year old smelter town, population 15,000, located in northwestern British Columbia with an active status of women group and a women's centre; Fraser Lake, a twelve year old mining town, population 3,000, located 90 miles west of Prince George in the north central area of B.C., also with an active women's centre; Mackenzie, a ten year old milltown, population 5,313, located 120 miles northeast of Prince George. The women's centre there has folded due to lack of funding but there is an active women's organization.

The goals of the Task Force were:

- -to assist and involve women living in these resource communities in defining the needs of these communities as they relate to women,
- -to develop techniques that will effectively identify the problems relevant to women in single industry resource communities,
- -to prepare a report outlining the concerns and needs identified.

The Task Force was coordinated by a woman working in Northern B.C. as a Consultant on Women's Issues through the Women's Programme of the Federal Department of the Secretary of State. The members of the Task Force began their research in the winter of 1976-77. The Task Force met twice as a whole. In January all members travelled to Prince George, and in March to Kitimat, to participate in two-day workshops coordinated by the Women's Research Centre. Each of the Task Force members completed her report under a short term contract to the Women's Programme of the Department of the Secretary of State, and the Women's Research Centre workshops were also completed under contract to the same Department.

III. METHOD - BIBLIOGRAPHY

The approach taken in these studies is based on the method of "participant observation". The aim here, however, is to include the observer, as a member of the community of persons and interests, and to make her experience and knowledge of the world the starting point of both the description and analysis. What this means in practice is that the women who present the studies are themselves, so to speak, "the study", for indeed they do in their account of day to day living, experience, present, and represent what it means for a woman to live in a northern single industry town in British Columbia.

The focus of the presentations is on creating an understanding of the day to day living experience of women in this context, to make visible women's domain and its boundaries and limitations. In the research that is carried out on northern development women are frequently absent or subsumed in other categories, and women's experience is not included as a part of accounts concerned with life and work in single industry towns. This is particularly the case where the work and experience are not a part of the public world of work, but are in the private or domestic world in which women maintain what is generally an invisible support system. The perspective here gives visibility to women's work, roles and problems. In these accounts women speak for themselves. It is the known, lived, day to day experience that is being presented, and the screen that is often provided by the researcher has been removed.

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Women's Research Centre
Vancouver, British Columbia
1977

IV. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Task Force members are building a communications network by sharing their reports and experiences with interested women in other single industry and resource based communities, and are bringing their findings to the attention of appropriate government departments, businesses, organizations, and professions inside and outside of their communities. A major focus of action is to assist in the planning of a conference on "Women and Economic Development" to be held in Prince George in the fall of 1977 to which will be invited women from single industry and resource towns from throughout British Columbia.

MAP OF BRITISH COLUMBIA SHOWING:

A. Kitimat
B. Fraser Lake
C. Mackenzie

NORTHERN B.C. WOMEN'S TASK FORCE ON SINGLE INDUSTRY RESOURCE COMMUNITIES.

KITIMAT REPORT

TAMITIK STATUS OF WOMEN

1977

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Kitimat Townsite Report (1951 - 1952) is a 270 page study which was meant to be the guide to development of the town of Kitimat, British Columbia. The following quote is the opening paragraph in the planning objectives written by Clarence Stein:

> "The purpose of Kitimat is the industrial success of the plant. That success will depend on the degree that workers are content, that they like living in Kitimat. Unless the town can attract and hold industrial workers, there will be continuing turnover and difficulty, interfering with dependable output."

This paragraph is important in that it holds information which explains, in part, why life for many women in Kitimat is the way it is today.

The first sentence outlines the value hierarchy that the town was built on. The top priority of the town is the success of Alcan. The contentment of the workers is important, but only in so far as it affects the success of the plant. Women, who even today don't significantly count as "workers," are not mentioned at all.

In 1973, the turnover rate at Alcan skyrocketed to 62 per cent. Although it is difficult to see that this has had much of a negative effect on the "dependable output," as Alcan's profits after taxes in 1976 were fifty-one million dollars, and for the first quarter of 1977 were thirty-five point five million dollars, an Employee Turnover Report was done to look into the matter. The report found that there

was an increase in young, short-service single men as a proportion of the work force, and that there was a substantial increase in turnover of these men. It also found that the two main needs of these men not being met by the community were entertainment and transportation. As a result of these findings, Alcan stated that they were, "...examining closely the 'entertainment' problem with a view to encouraging the development of more recreation and social opportunities for young, single workers. We are also continuing to actively support the municipality in its efforts to institute a public transportation system." Since the completion of the report in 1974 a public transportation system has been instituted in Kitimat, and a number of pool halls and pubs have opened.

Unfortunately, in a town dominated by one industry as Kitimat is, where women do not directly affect the "dependable output" of the industry, their needs have not been so closely attended to.

This brief is meant to be a beginning. It is an attempt to begin defining the problems and the needs of women who live in the northern, single industry town of Kitimat and we suspect that our needs won't be too unlike those of women in other single industry towns throughout the north.

This paper has been written by a group of women who work in their homes, are mothers, and are at various times employed in their community. We are not sociologists or anthropologists, and we have made no pretense at being academic. In trying to set down the life experience of women living in our town, it seemed only logical to us that we should turn not to "experts" (who are also usually men) for information,

but to ourselves, our friends, and our neighbours. As a result, this report is written by women, deliberately from the perspective of women. It is a beginning....

II. KITIMAT: A PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Kitimat is located 70 miles inland from the open waters of Hecate Strait along the British Columbia coast. It lies at the end of Douglas Channel and at the terminus of Highway 25 from Terrace.

By air, Kitimat is 400 miles northwest of Vancouver, 70 miles southeast of Prince Rupert, and 250 miles west of the nearest inland B.C. city, Prince George. Distance by land to these centers is double that by air and the nearest town, Terrace, is 36 miles away.

The population of Kitimat is approximately 11,500. The town has three main neighbourhoods; Nechako (first to be built), Kildala, and Whitesail. City Centre, the main shopping and business area, is situated near the Kildala neighbourhood and a smaller center exists in the Nechako neighbourhood. There are small neighbourhood grocery stores in each area. The Service Center is located across the river away from all residential and shopping areas. Looped streets in all neighbourhoods have connecting walkways.

The climate in Kitimat is unpleasant. Most winters have up to and exceeding 25 feet of wet snow between the months of November and April. Some years there are snow banks piled until the end of May. There is a heavy rainfall as well, averaging 65 inches a year. This often falls in the late spring and summer.

III. OVERVIEW: EVERYDAY PROBLEMS OF KITIMAT WOMEN

A. Housing

1. Many of the older houses have no basements or covered play areas, so small children confined indoors because of snow and rain have no place to run and play. These children could be confined indoors for at least half the year due to weather. Mothers find coping with their children difficult in these situations. The original town plan stated "more indoor living for both adults and children. This means fireplaces, play spaces in the house or a covered area."

2. There are 250 mobile homes situated in one area and there is no covered common play area with equipment so children can leave their mother to herself for a while.

3. A large number of apartments and condominiums are not well maintained inside or out and because of a lack of low income housing many people are forced to live in these permanently. It can be very depressing for women at home all day with preschool children.

4. Many non-basement houses have been built and in winters as snow from the street is blown in and piled higher than the roof the atmosphere becomes very claustrophobic. Many women in these situations become depression cases.

5. Most house builders have not taken the many feet of snow that will fall every winter into consideration when constructing. A pregnant woman was physically trapped in her house due to the fact that both doors

had no covered entrance and snow piled up against them. Houses do not have carports and garages on the front near the street and long driveways, and make snow shovelling a continual burden. As snow falls heavily for long periods of time, women find shovelling long driveways before going to work or visiting very exhausting.

B. Shopping

1. There is no elevator in the major department store, therefore, a woman with a child in a stroller must carry both three floors. Often a toddler finds walking the stairs too difficult. This service could easily have been provided when the store was built as it was expected that the town would have young families.

2. The town plan mentioned that "covered arcades or courts for shopping make it possible to stop and chat outside a shop even in rainy weather." This was obviously not carried out as there are areas in the city center that have no covered walkways, causing discomfort to women shopping with small children on the many days it is either raining or snowing.

There is one ramp going from the lower level of the City Center to the upper; however, as it is located at one far end, and is not covered it is of little value. The other end has steep steps from the lower to upper level. Women with small children were obviously not taken into consideration when the center was planned.

3. Supermarkets in particular should have at least one more 'open until 9' evening in addition to Fridays. This would thin the crowds and give more opportunity for either parent to shop without the children. Pharmacies have no open hours on Sundays or evenings. This has caused great inconvenience when medication has been urgently required.

C. Transportation

1. There is a bus service in Kitimat, and although it is a help, many women find it difficult getting to places that are not on direct routes, for example from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Busses which go to Alcan are scheduled to fit in with the shifts, so it would be possible for husbands to use the service and leave their car at home for their wives. Unfortunately, very few do this.

   Immigrant women are particularly aided by the bus service as few drive. They can gain some independence by not having to rely on husbands to drive them everywhere. Some mothers are freed from the chore of driving children to and from swimming, skating, etc. There is a desperate need, however, for bus shelters, as the heavy incessant rain can make someone very wet in the few minutes spent waiting for a bus.

2. It is often necessary to go to Terrace, as it is the center for many government agencies in the region, but as there is no bus service out of Kitimat, women who cannot drive, or who don't drive the family car, or don't have a car, cannot get there when the offices are open.

3. There are flights twice a day to Vancouver from the Terrace Airport 30 miles away. This Airport is in a difficult navigational area and has no instrument landing facilities, so planes often don't land because of bad weather. Passengers then have to be taken via bus the 90 miles to Prince Rupert to make connections. It has taken some people two or more days to reach Vancouver, and often the same length of time to return. This can cause a great deal of inconvenience and frustration, especially when travelling with children or keeping appointments.

D. The Social Situation

Some of the social problems of Kitimat are unique for a town this size because of the wide variety of ethnic groups. There is a large group of Portuguese residents who came for employment with Alcan. There are lesser numbers of Greeks, Italians, Germans, East-Indians, and Finnish.

1. The women in some of these groups tend to stay at home and mix only with others of their group. They are the last in the family to learn English, and have to depend on husbands and children to take them shopping, to appointments, etc. Many dislike living here. There is a need for a neighbourhood center that women could walk to and could meet others; this would be a change from watching the piles of snow or continuous rain. It would be a great help to women to know there was somewhere closeby to go in times of stress. This point was included in the original Kitimat Townsite Report, so was recognized as important even then.

2. Babysitting is not provided at the Recreation Center, so most women are not free to go swimming or skating during the day.

3. There is a child-minding center, operated by the Tamitik Status of Women, but it was unable to locate in the main shopping area due to lack of money, so it is not as useful to the extent that it was intended to be.

4. There is no Welcome Wagon service for newcomers to Kitimat, and it is very difficult for women to become informed on services offered, existing social organizations, etc.

5. All pubs and lounges are male-oriented and women can be made to feel uncomfortable when they enter singly or in a group.

6. Very few elderly people live in Kitimat, as it is mainly a town of young families and singles. Women, therefore, generally do not have parents nearby to help them out with problems.

7. Because of language barriers, many immigrant women and their neighbours find it difficult to get to know each other.

E. Health Care

1. Medical services available to Kitimat residents seem to be adequate. A large hospital, built to accommodate 200 patients, at present services 98 beds. The town supports one Orthopaedic Surgeon and eight General

Practitioners, all male. While there seems to be adequate availability of doctors' services for broken limbs, appendectomies, childhood ailments and pneumonia, a wider range of competently delivered services is lacking. Women contacted for this report all agreed there should be a resident Obstetrician-Gynecologist in the town. Some of the observations made by these women support this demand.

One woman, when told her pregnancy test was positive, asked her doctor to give her guidelines for a diet as she realised she was overweight. His reply was, 'steak and eggs,' and when asked to elaborate he repeated,'steak and eggs,' and continued with the examination.

An immigrant woman has seen three doctors in the past five years due to a high turnover in medical personnel. Not one has mentioned Pap smears or breast examination to her and she is not aware whether either of these procedures has ever been carried out.

Two women asking about sterilization of either men or women were told by their mutual doctor, "I don't sterilize men, they don't get pregnant!"

An East Indian woman questions whether her hysterectomy was a necessary operation. She felt pressured into an immediate decision without understanding the reasons for the surgery, or if there were any alternatives to surgery.

A young 26 year old woman was advised by her surgeon, "If you were my wife I'd want that uterus out this week." Not happy with this approach, she sought a specialist's advice in Vancouver, underwent a minor procedure and has remained free of the disease two years to date.

2. Hospital personnel admitted to a high incidence of women having their babies delivered by Caesarian section. Many of the patients felt unhappy about the fact that they could not have a second opinion or specialised care when their pregnancy or labour presented complications.

3. Many complaints by women in the north can be attributed to the attitude they face when trying to function in a very male-oriented part of the country. Women arriving in Kitimat face a very stressful period in trying to adapt to this environment. Many feel they never quite make the transition. When such basic needs as employment, shelter, social and medical needs are not met, women lose their sense of self-worth and feel oppressed.

   Over the long winter months severe depression often manifests itself. Doctors admit to a very high incidence of depression among young married women but beyond prescribing mood-elevating drugs and tranquillizers, they feel there is little more they can do.

   Women themselves complain the doctors have little time to spend with them. Many women will come to the doctor showing all the signs of depression but complaining of some medical ailment. Doctors try to treat the complaints, often failing to deal with the psychological and social problems because of a lack of support systems. A number of women each year are brought into hospital after having taken an overdose of their prescription drugs in a desperate attempt to have someone recognize their problems and help them deal with their situations.

A young woman recently discharged from hospital after an overdose relates, "I did not want to die! I wanted to live but I needed help desperately. My mental health was deeply affecting my family. The drugs the doctor gave me enabled me to function, but I came to depend on them. Nothing changed. My anxieties remained. After months of existing in this drugged stupor I chose the only alternative I could see."

Another woman states she was so anxious she couldn't leave her house for days on end. "I would phone the doctor's office explaining I needed to see someone but could not come to the office. The nurse would then suggest I come down when I felt better. When I finally managed, the doctor gave me a prescription for tranquillizers. Once home with them I took all the tablets. I really felt that's what everyone wanted me to do."

A young mother with small children has been admitted to hospital a number of times in a severely depressed state. "It's always the same experience. I'm fed a great number of pills and feel 'heady' the length of my hospitalisation. I'm discharged when I tell them I'm feeling better and want to return to my family, who also have to be admitted to the children's ward during my stay in hospital, for lack of alternative homecare."

While we are aware of the problems that exist in finding qualified specialists to practise in isolated northern towns, we feel strongly that a greater emphasis on preventive medicine and mental health should be stressed in these areas.

In the original Kitimat Townsite Report, neighbourhood health centres were planned for. These were to be located in each of the neighbourhood centers, ensuring easy accessability for the local residents. Programs on general health education and mental and physical well-being were to be implemented in these centers by trained staff.

In order to implement change in the health services offered to this and other northern towns, women's needs should be clearly defined. Women must be involved in the economic development of these areas to identify and plan for ways to meet their needs and the needs of their families. It must be realised that for these towns to stabilize and mature, a large percentage of the population must be women. We hear and read of deep concern at the steady rise in alcoholism, mental illness and violence in the north. Numerous studies and reports clearly illustrate the enormity of the problem. What is needed now are the resources to ensure we can implement these changes for the betterment of the health of the northern populace.

IV. PROBLEMS WOMEN FACE UPON ARRIVAL

It is unfortunate that very little of the original Kitimat Town Plan was ever implemented, as much of the analysis of the problems of living in an instant northern community is correct, and some of the plans suggested for coping with these problems sound helpful even no in 1977.

The problems to be dealt with were described briefly, and in general, as follows:

> "The workers must find Kitimat more than temporarily acceptable. They must be enthusiastic about it as a particularly fine place in which to live and bring up their families. It must become the place they want as homeland, the town they are going to make their own.
>
> There is much to contend against in making this possible; including Climate, Remoteness, Strangeness. There is the weather--seemingly incessant rain, snow, winds. There is strangeness--the wilderness. There is remoteness from all habitual things and places--old friends, markets, customs. There is the counter-attraction of the big city with its varied life and entertainment, and the chance of...getting another good job."

These are exceptional problems; they are extreme. And in all but a few instances they remain to be dealt with in Kitimat today.

Some of the everyday problems that women in particular confront in Kitimat were mentioned in a previous section of this paper. A general outline of the problems that women face upon arrival would begin as follows. Most often, a woman

comes to Kitimat because her husband has found, or hopes to find, work. Being in a new and very remote area, she is most often hundreds or thousands of miles apart from family and friends. It is not easy to meet people and establish new friendships and once friendships are made, they are frequently not long-lasting due to the high turnover rate of the population. This lack of a support system contributes to the development of a number of problems. Childrearing becomes more difficult and an additional burden is placed on the husband-wife relationship as they must now look to each other to fulfill the needs that were once met by family and friends.

Problems and their resulting stresses continue from here. It has been approximated that the weather, with its "...seemingly incessant rain, snow, winds...," keeps young children indoors a majority of the days of the year. The original Kitimat Plan showed an awareness of this problem in the statement, "Special Problems: A larger amount of rain means lots of rainy days for children, therefore more need for indoor play. In Florida and India mothers and children are not so irritable as in New York where indoor resources are inadequate." The solution suggested for this problem was that houses should have separate playrooms or extra space to be used as a play area. In fact though, most houses in Kitimat today are very cramped, and it is only the very expensive homes that have any extra space at all.

It is difficult to communicate the strain that living in Kitimat during the long winter and rainy months is for an unemployed woman with preschool age children. Children at this age are generally too young to be allowed to play out in

the snow alone. Parented supervision is necessary as deep snow poses the threat of immobility and/or suffocation. Also, the only areas that are cleared, and thus useable for small children to play in, are the main pedestrain walkways, the driveway or parking lot of the child's home, and the street. None of these are suitable for a small child's play area.

This situation affects children and their mothers in several ways. Most Kitimat preschool age children get little opportunity to learn socialization skills or to take part in the kinds of activities necessary to develop their physical coordination and large muscles. Instead, the running, jumping, climbing and throwing, so typical of this age group, must take place within the cramped confines of the home. And this situation, in turn, when it becomes a fairly regular way of life stretching out to include a major portion of the year, is a most disquieting environment for an adult to find herself in. The comment J.A. Riffel makes in a study entitled, Quality of Life in Resource Towns, that the incidence of mental illness among unemployed wives is high in these communities, can be understood.

V. EMPLOYMENT

Many women, either upon arrival in Kitimat, or as an outlet from the situation described above, seek employment. For the women who do get jobs that they like, their adjustment to Kitimat is often better than those who do not. The weather, the isolation and the monotony of life do not seem to effect them as greatly; some of these employed women say they, "...don't mind living here," or, they, "like it." Unfortunately, they are a minority.

The statistics show that women are employed at approximately 700 jobs but this information is misleading. Many of the jobs are only part-time. Even when they are full-time, the majority of women earn $8,000 or less per year. Most of the jobs cover a very narrow range of interest areas, with most centering on clerical, sales, and service-oriented work.

Looking at the three supermarkets in Kitimat, there are about 36 men working full-time, with the few male part-time workers, to the best of our researcher's information, being high school students. Full-time female workers number about six and part-time female workers total about 34. At the largest department store, an employer of many women, only one-third of the female workers are hired full-time.

A long-time worker at the largest supermarket said that, "Most women would like to work full-time, but they all know why they aren't hired for it. When you're hired on a part-time basis," she said, "the company doesn't have to, and doesn't, provide any of the benefits that it does for its full-time workers. Part-time workers don't have any medical plan, no sick leave, no life insurance, no long-term sick

plan, no paid holidays, and no accumulated time off."

A young woman worked part-time in a department store here for one year while still a student. After graduation, she applied to get on full-time. Despite her relatively long and good record at the store, she had to continue working part-time for another one and a half years, all the while inquiring about full-time employment, and all the while not receiving any fringe benefits, until she was finally hired in that capacity. She's now considered lucky to have obtained a full-time job at all.

In fact, her situation continues to be an unfortunate one. Although she is now working full-time as head of a department, she clears only about $6,000 per year. She is in her early twenties and still lives in her parents' home. Asked if she could afford to get her own place, she said, "No, that's the problem. I just couldn't."

Her income is typical. An average full-time clerical job pays a gross salary of about $7,200 per year, and an average gross income for a secretary is about $7,800. Hardly enough money to live on.

VI. WOMEN AT ALCAN

In an attempt to earn a decent living wage for their work, and also in an attempt to enter work areas more to their interest, a number of women have managed to obtain jobs at Alcan. Although Alcan is to be credited for beginning to hire women into its hourly paid work force in 1974, the participation of women is still at a token level. At present, 61 our of 2,000 hourly paid workers are women. Recently, the personnel manager has said that he feels the company has not been working hard enough at bringing women into the hourly paid work force.

In general, women have more difficulty getting hired on than men. The guidelines set for hiring men or women are that they be 5'6", weigh 140 pounds, and have two years previous industrial experience. The physical requirements eliminate many women and most women have never had the opportunity of acquiring previous industrial experience. As well, old prejudicial attitudes persist. The Administrator of the Potline Training Department said recently that he prefers to hire men over women. One woman working in the plant was told by a foreman that he'd retire before he'd have a woman on his crew. And a number of women working in the plant have said that men who have applied after they did have been hired first. On being interviewed for a job in the Potlines, one attractive woman was told, "You don't want to work here, it'll ruin your hair and complexion." Whereupon she replied, "Do you say that to the men, too?"

One of the first women to be hired at Alcan on an hourly paid basis 4 years ago says bluntly that, "Women aren't given equal opportunities as men for jobs in the plant. There's no advancement for women--I don't think you can advance. I don't

think they will ever give apprenticeships to women--Alcan is not ready for it. You know the stories they lay on you--you can't do this, you can't do that--if you're single you'll move and if you're married you'll get pregnant and want to stay home."

This same woman feels that, "Having all men bosses makes it hard to relate your problems. They overreact to women in the work force, because they haven't adjusted to it." She relates the following story: "One day a woman had a very minor accident where she dented the fender on her vehicle. The whole plant heard about it. Next day all the guys in my lunchroom were saying things like, 'See, women just can't do the job.' Well, I know these people; I work with them. Almost every one of them has had a lot worse accidents than that woman had; accidents where they did thousands of dollars damage or hurt someone. So I reminded them about it, and after that I didn't hear a peep from them."

Most of the twenty women who were originally hired in 1974 are gone. The woman quoted above, one of the few remaining, thinks that part of the reason for this is the lack of opportunity for further training and advancement. Another very important reason, she feels, is the lack of daycare. About one-third of the women presently working in the plant at Alcan have, at their own request, been transferred into the Janitorial Force. The reason seems to be that this is the only area where working hours are more flexible and can be adjusted. With this advantage, these women can work during those limited hours when babysitting or daycare facilities are available in town. But for the majority of other women, those who have never seen their way to applying for a job in the plant, those working in the plant now, or those

for whom it was the cause of finally leaving the plant, the lack of suitable daycare facilities remains a crucial, unsolved problem. When asked how this problem of childcare for women who work shifts could be resolved, one woman worker answered, "Simple! We need 24 hour daycare."

VII. DAYCARE

There is no 24 hour daycare in Kitimat, and the child-care facilities that are available here are inadequate--even for women not working at Alcan. There is one "full-time" daycare which is open from 7:30 to 5:30, and has a capacity of 25 children. The other service available is a half-day (morning and afternoon) nursery school, which has about a 25 child capacity for each session. Because there are a few vacancies in these preschools, some people conclude that the childcare service offered in Kitimat is meeting the needs of the people here. But the vacancies are misleading.

Women cannot always make use of the existing facilities, because the facilities don't correspond with their needs. To begin with, there are fewer government subsidies now being given for daycare. For women who are heads of families (and most single heads of families <u>are</u> women) very few earn more than $8,000 per year. The $150 per month day care fee comes to $1,800 on a yearly basis for one child, and for two children it doubles to $3,600. This is clearly not affordable for the majority of women who are single parents. For other women, the hours of daycare service don't correspond with their working hours. Still others have children younger than the three-year or older than the five-year limit that the center allows, and have to find other means to take care of their children. Some women with two children find that only one of them fits the criteria for the care center, thereby making use of the facility too inconvenient. Then there are those who don't drive and find it too difficult (with weather and transportation conditions being what they are) to first take the child to the center and then get themselves to work. It is easier for these people when a sitter can be found who

lives in the immediate neighbourhood. Then there are other women, who either can't find a job that pays enough to make working profitable (keeping in mind the added expense of childcare), or can't find a job at all.

No matter what the reason is for not using the daycare facilities, the fact is that only about 25 pre-school age Kitimat children are enrolled in "full-time," licensed daycare. It is only recently, particularly in the last few decades, that there has been evidence showing the importance of the environment experienced during those early years, in the long-term development of human beings. In one of the landmark findings in the field of Education (1964), Benjamin Bloom's data has suggested that, "...in terms of development of intelligence...about 50 percent takes place between conception and age 4." Bloom stresses the effects of environment on intelligence. "Environments, he believes, can make about a 20 point difference in I.Q." The effects of environments appear to be greatest in the early, most rapid periods of development."

The implications of this information are too important to ignore. We must see the situation of women and their young children shut in their homes day after day, through the very long rainy and snowy days of the Kitimat year, as a most serious problem.

VIII. WOMEN ON WELFARE

Looking at the overall living situation of women in Kitimat in light of the various factors discussed in this paper, the picture drawn is one of an oppressive life experience. It is not surprising that as a result of living in a stressful, unfulfilling situation, a high number of family breakups occur. This kind of tragedy is not confined to those families who have moved here from elsewhere, and must do without the support of family and friends; it is also common to people who have grown up here. A 53 year old woman who has been a resident of Kitimat for 18 years, and has five children, says,

> "I've seen it happen time and again. When girls finish high school at 17 or 18, if they don't have the money to leave here and go to university, and they're lucky enough to get a job, even a full-time job, they still don't make enough money to live on. So what do they do? In a few years, they get married. What else can they do? And then after they're married they have kids, and then they're stuck in the house with their kids. On top of that, they were usually too young to get married in the first place. So, you know what happens from there; I've seen it time and again. The marriage ends in divorce and the young woman is left with two or three kids, no training, no job, and she goes on welfare."

Although not able to give figures, a representative of the Human Resources Department here in Kitimat said, "There are more women than men who are heads of single-parent families." Also, he said, "Because of lack of work or lack of daycare, many of these women end up on welfare. In fact, there are more women on welfare in Kitimat than men."

IX. CONCLUSION

According to Dr. J. Lajzerowicz, of the Federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, "...one-industry or resource-based towns are a significant component of Canada's urban structure accounting for in excess of 2 million inhabitants in all locations in 1972." And in a discussion of planned single-enterprise communities in a recent paper entitled, Planning New Communities in Canada by Norman E.P. Pressman, Kitimat is singled out as, "...one of the country's more successful ventures... It is considered as one of the most significant of North American contemporary contributions to planning principles and practice..."

If single-industry communities form such a significant percentage of the entire Canadian population, and if, out of over 800 communities Kitimat is singled out as an example of "one of the country's more successful ventures," then the time to re-examine this kind of rhetoric, and the thinking it reveals, is long overdue.

To begin with, it is one thing to commission a group of people to plan a new town; it is quite another to spend the required money and actually bring those plans to life. With Alcan's profits soaring, Kitimat (according to the priorities quoted from the Town Plan, in the introduction of this paper) has been successful in accomplishing the purpose set for it. As a result, Alcan has not felt the need to, and indeed has not, implemented more than one-third of the original Town Plan. So much for Kitimat's, "contributions to planning principles and practice."

But even more important here is the idea that keeps cropping up, both in the Kitimat Town Plan and in Pressman's comment, of "success." What kind of a "success" is it?

The situation we find is that over 800 communities throughout Canada were created by privately owned companies, for the express purpose of exploiting, for private profit, the resources found in these areas. This has been the main raison d'être for these towns. Also, these one-industry or resource-based operations (eg., mining, pulp and paper, aluminum) offer employment in areas that have been traditionally, and continue to be, occupied by men. As a result of these factors, we find these communities are operating without any substantial consideration for the welfare of the women who live there.

The life experience of the women of Kitimat, one of the "more successful" of these company towns, has been described here. It has been seen that these women are most often wives who are kept indoors (with their children, if preschool age) due to the inclement weather, and the lack of support services for a major poriton of the year; and it is known that there is a high incidence of mental illness for unemployed wives. Yet employment opportunities are scarce and even when a job is found it rarely offers enough money to live on. The lack of usable daycare again handicaps women in their efforts to become employed. When family breakups occur, women are more often than men the heads of single-parent families; and more women end up on welfare than men.

These profound problems continue to exist, while Alcan lends its energies to encouraging the opening of pool halls and pubs in an effort to lower their turnover rate. When a group of women requested $100 per month from Alcan to help them open a child-minding centre (they had, on their own

initiative, already received a small grant from the government to help finance the centre), Alcan replied that they felt they should not be involved with this sort of service, and that it should be "self-contained."

Clearly, when a town can be called "successful" in the name of monetary profit, and private profit at that, the priorities are wrong. The needs of people must be the top priority of a society, if that society is to "succeed" in any real sense at all.

What are women's needs in Kitimat? There are three main needs at this time. The first is that women need equal employment opportunities. We are long past the time when women working outside the home can be viewed as bringing in "luxury" income for that home. Steady employment brings the chance to gain self-confidence and satisfaction. But even more to the point, people, male or female, have a right to have the opportunity to earn a decent, living, wage.

The second main need that women have is for a wider range of competently delivered health services. The services offered must also be adequate in their availability to the entire population.

Finally, we know that we can not look to companies to fulfill these needs at their own will. It is time that specific steps are taken by the government to ensure that these needs are being met. Jobs which earn a living wage must be created. For existing jobs, affirmative-action programs should be implemented to change unfair hiring practices. And for the future women must be involved in the development of new single-industry or resource-based towns at the planning level. Guidelines and criteria for each new town should be established by independent and representative task forces, before licences are issued to proceed.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Provincial and federal government departments involved in economic development and single industry towns establish independent regional task forces of lay women and men to assist in setting out guidelines and criteria for further economic development plans.

2. The special needs of families be taken into consideration in the designing and building of homes and in the planning of the townsite in future single industry communities.

3. A regular daily bus service be instituted between Kitimat and Terrace and that local bus stops in Kitimat be covered.

4. A resident obstetrician-gynecologist be hired for the community of Kitimat.

5. Equal employment opportunity programs be implemented to end unfair hiring practices and provide more employment opportunities for women in Kitimat.

6. A 24-hour quality child care service be set up to allow women to participate more effectively in the shift work available in the community of Kitimat.

NORTHERN B.C. WOMEN'S TASK FORCE ON SINGLE INDUSTRY RESOURCE COMMUNITIES.

FRASER LAKE REPORT

GINA BAKER

1977

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Task Force was set up to assist and involve women living in northern B.C. resource communities in defining the needs of those communities as they relate to women. It was to develop techniques that will more effectively identify the problems relevant to women in single industry communities and to report the needs and research techniques developed.

I wish to thank the many residents of Fraser Lake who gave their time, co-operation, and who shared their experiences, opinions, and information. I would like to thank members of the Village Council, mine management and employees, people in business, homemakers, and the many others who contributed to this report.

Gina Baker
Fraser Lake, B.C.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fraser Lake is a single resource community located in central British Columbia.

The problems from a woman's view-point are many in a single resource town.

During the day she may feel there are few places to go and few things to do to occupy her time or challenge her abilities. Shopping facilities are limited and she may do most of it one hundred miles away, or by mail order catalogue. There are no organized centres for her pre-school children and she will probably rarely get a break from their constant responsibility. There is little chance of her finding employment as all jobs have long waiting lists.

The winters are long and there are few places of entertainment; for example, there are no movies. If her husband is on shift work she may find she misses most of the dances and social gatherings, her friends may not call for fear of waking her husband, and she may find herself taking her children for drives or walks with no place to go, so her husband can sleep uninterrupted in the afternoon.

She may have to live temporarily in a shack without running water, or with another family in a trailer, or she may be in an apartment beside neighbours with barking dogs or midnight parties.

She may find it difficult to make friends and she may become withdrawn and depressed. Alcoholism may become a problem, and her family relationships may break down.

However, she may be living in a modern home set in beautiful surroundings; her husband may be employed at a well paid and satisfying job and working day shift. She may be working in a rewarding job, active in numerous clubs and organizations, participating in outdoor activities, and she may be active in community affairs. Her life could be full and satisfying.

The differences are extreme. The problems do exist.

The Task Force is an effort to accumulate various women's experiences and view-points. It is an effort to create an awareness of the various problems in services and facilities, in politics and community development, in industry and employment, in housing, in the social structure, in adjustment, in child care and homemaking, with hospital and medical facilities, with financial difficulties and with social problems such as family break-down. The Task Force is also an effort to report these experiences, to define the needs of women in resource communities, to suggest solutions and to make recommendations. Once the needs have been clarified it is possible to work towards solutions.

The problems and recommendations are contained in the following report.

NORTHERN B.C. WOMEN'S TASK FORCE ON SINGLE INDUSTRY TOWNS:

FRASER LAKE REPORT

The purpose of this paper is to define the needs of a single resource community as they relate to women. I have spoken to many women in the community of Fraser Lake and have tried to represent their varied viewpoints.

This paper discusses Fraser Lake's location, businesses and services, political structure, development of community, structure of industry and problems in employment, alternative employment, housing, social structure, problems in communication, adjustment, places of social interaction, organizations and clubs, concerns of mothers, concerns of homemakers, transportation, medical services, and the work of the Women's Center. It offers some alternatives and solutions.

1. TOWN LOCATION

The resource community of Fraser Lake is situated one hundred miles west of the nearest city, Prince George. Fort Fraser, thirteen miles east, and Endako, seven miles west, are its nearest neighbours both with populations of approximately six hundred. Vanderhoof on the East and Burns Lake on the West are its nearest neighbours, both with populations of approximately six hundred. Vanderhoof on the East and Burns Lake on the West are approximately forty miles distant. The area population of Fraser Lake, including a fifteen mile radius, is about 4,500, the village population is officially 1417.

The village is surrounded by beautiful country-side comprised of natural forest, farms and lakes. From many sites the view extends for miles. The village is bordered by the highway on the South and Fraser Lake on the North and West.

2. BUSINESSES AND SERVICES

The businesses in Fraser Lake are: one hotel with dining area, two cafes, a pool and games room with fast foods, one Shop Easy food store, one small grocery, one clothing and dry goods store, one hardware, one drugstore, one bank, one building supplies, one beauty salon, one laundromat, one Simpsons-Sears mail order office and retail outlet for local crafts, two garages, one taxi business, one appliance business, one electric business, one tire company, and a few trucking and excavation outfits. There are four police officers, two doctors, and one dentist resident here. A Department of Human Resources counsellor visits once a week, a Public Health nurse visits once every two weeks and a probation officer is rarely available.

3. POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Fraser Lake became an incorporated village in September, 1966. The government appointed the first council. Since 1967 the village has had an elected council. The present one is comprised of the mayor and four aldermen. The mayor and one alderman employed on staff are at the Canex Placer mine, two aldermen are business men and one is employed by the Department of Highways. None are from minority ethnic groups and none are women. Council meetings are open and the public is encouraged to participate. Public notices are

given when major decisions are to be discussed. A few people have expressed the opinion that some decisions are "railroaded" through, that they never know in advance. One person suggested that legal notices could be written in more comprehensible language.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY

The community of Fraser Lake existed before Canex Placer developed the Endako mine fourteen miles southwest of Fraser Lake in 1964. (The mine opened in 1965). The mine bought land, hired a planner who developed an overall plan for the community, put in sewer and water (which they sold to the village for one dollar), put in roads and services, built housing, developed a camp, developed a trailer court, built a medical clinic and bought equipment, and encouraged shopping facilities. The shopping centre was developed by H.A. Roberts of Vancouver. The recreation complex was built by the mine. Taxes from the mine go into the village.

5. STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRY AND PROBLEMS IN EMPLOYMENT

The Endako mine has a pyramid structure which is restrictive. Few from the bottom ever reach the upper levels. Most workers remain in the skill channel or department where they entered although workers with seniority can bid into other jobs. Promotion is slow depending on seniority and upper level jobs are often filled from outside. The mine offers a good apprenticeship program which many workers take advantage of, then move on to other jobs. There are no women supervisory staff. It is generally felt by women that men are hired in preference to women. Several women have said that they are told when they apply for work that they are as

well qualified as other applicants and to keep calling in. I have spoken to many women who have been waiting for months. They felt that they were not treated with either respect or honesty. Some have driven to the mine for arranged appointments only to find no one available to talk to them. Some have been told there are no openings when there are openings posted at the mine. When one woman asked about these openings she was told that she would not qualify for any of them. When she persisted and asked what the qualifications were she was given the annoyed answer, "That's for me to decide," and the telephone conversation came to an abrupt end. One single parent spent several weeks thinking she could expect a job anytime. She said that if she had been told that there was little chance of one she would have moved to another area. One student worked all summer and decided to take a year off college and continue working. She was hired and then laid off after the school term had begun. She felt that her supervisor knew her capabilities after her working for several months; yet they hired her, placing her on the usual probation period, and fired her on the last day of probation. Five women have stated that women are given a much more difficult probation period than men. They are tested and expected to be found inferior. One woman thinks the probation period is not really relevant. She stated that one young man on her shift went through the probation period trying to avoid work whenever possible. He found places to sleep, some of which were extremely dangerous. He was given warnings, and was finally fired weeks after his probation period was over. Once women have been at the mine several months and have completed their probation period their work problems become similar to those of the men.

Some male employees have found work satisfactory. They get along with their supervisors, get time off or shifts rearranged if family problems develop such as sickness of a child or wife, they find management flexible and concerned. However all situations and supervisors are not the same and wives and families feel the effects of discouragement and resentment if this is how their husbands feel about their work.

Several wives have commented that their husbands feel that they are seldom given credit for jobs well done or recognition of their ability. They rarely get opportunities to express ideas that would go into planning. One qualified man with twenty-three years experience stated that he was told to do a certain job which he explained to his supervisor would not work. He suggested another way. He was told it wasn't his job to think, and to go ahead as planned. After eight hours of work it was realized that the plan would not work so he was told to do it another way. The worker expressed resentment that the second plan was his original suggestion but he was not given any recognition for the fact and his time spent on a useless job was not considered worth commenting on. It is also felt that consideration is often given to relationships rather than merit both at work and in the community. Women have commented on the necessity for their husbands to feel of value at work. When their self-worth drops, their interest in their children, their wives, and social activities drop proportionately. One woman whose husband spends a great deal of time at the bar when things are not good at work is directly affected. Other times he is happy to stay home with the children and she has free evenings.

6. ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT

Other places of employment are the Fraser Lake Sawmill, the school board, the municipality, and private businesses. The Fraser Lake sawmill employs one hundred seventy men and twenty-three women, not including loggers. One woman employed at the mill said women have difficulty doing the mill work and the mill has a lot of time loss due to women worker's injuries. One woman was told that four women had developed tendonitis doing the job she was doing. This woman also stated that the women keep up the pace the same as the men. Anyone unable to handle the work is laid off. The attitude toward the workers at the mill is reported to be quite different than to the mine workers. One man who has worked at both places feels the supervisors at the mill have confidence in his ability and expect him to make decisions and get on with his work.

7. HOUSING

One of the biggest problems in Fraser Lake is housing. There are two trailer courts, private and mine-owned apartments, some houses and shacks for rent, and houses for purchase

There are two trailer parks in town and one outside town. It is difficult to get trailer space and the trailer parks in town are crowded and unattractive although they do have small play areas in them. A reliable source stated that one of the trailer courts is dangerously overcrowded and inadequately wired. One woman tells me that the fuse boxes are uncovered and in easy reach of children. She also said a lot of garbage is thrown down in back of the trailers and not cleaned up, an unfortunate view from her home. There are no lawns, flowers, or shrubs.

There are few rental units available. There is one private apartment block with six units. All other apartments are mine-owned and available to mine employees only. There are eighteen blocks with four to eight apartments in each. These are all built in row house fashion. They vary in desirability. Of the older ones, they all have a main floor with kitchen, living room and washroom, and an upper floor with bedrooms and bathroom. Some have basements. Sound travels easily from one apartment to the next, and noise from outside is scarcely dulled. There are several problems with living in the apartments. There is no penned in nursery area. A group of mothers asked permission to put one in at their own expense and were refused. The lack of a fenced nursery area and a fenced playground is a problem as there is a lot of traffic around the apartments, and toddlers get in the way of older children playing rougher sports, get bullied by other children or knocked over by dogs. There are no private yards at the older apartments, and this causes tension between neighbours. Many people have one or two dogs tied up outside. One woman said she could not hang out her washing without having to bypass her neighbour's dog, which was tied to the clothes line; she had to walk through its mess and if she dropped her laundry, it had to be re-washed because of dog manure. Children bring dog manure into the homes on their shoes. Young children are knocked down by the dogs' ropes or chains if the dogs are jumping around. Many people complain about dogs barking. One woman whose husband works shifts said he puts on an air-conditioner so his room is filled with continuous noise so the two barking dogs at the next apartment are not so disturbing.

Vandalism is a problem in the apartment areas. Several mothers have stated that they cannot leave anything outside. Children's bikes and toys disappear or are destroyed. One woman expressed frustration at having tried to dress up her apartment by placing a potted shrub outside only to have it destroyed within three hours. Many residents complain that because there are no private yards children run over others' steps, making a loud clatter, they stare in the living room windows and walk in unlocked doors. There are large numbers of children concentrated in the apartment areas and shift workers complain that they have great difficulty sleeping during the day and evening in the apartments near the playground during the warmer months. One of the biggest problems is the awareness of neighbours and the fact that sound travels so easily between apartments. People have to be considerate of neighbours' shifts, neighbours' childrens' bedtimes, so hammering, sawing, partying, playing music and so on can be done only when these activities fit into everyone's time plan. One family who were interviewed were resentful of the lack of consideration shown by their neighbours and so refused to give consideration to them. It developed into a minor feud.

Garbage is constantly mentioned as another problem at the apartments. There are garbage sheds that are an eye-sore. The grass is constantly littered although the village tries to keep them maintained with a sweeper.

The newest apartments are much more attractive and each has a private yard in front and a carport in back making the area in back fairly private, too. They are better constructed so noise is not such a problem, apparently, although consideration is still needed by neighbours. Between the newer apartments is an attractive children's playground, making it much more pleasant and easier for mothers of toddlers.

Only mine personnel can get mine apartments. If an employee wishes to take a job outside the mine he has to find other housing. When families break up and the husband leaves the family can no longer stay in their apartment. One mother of young children in this position thought that this was perhaps the cause of some common law relationships. She thought that the lack of housing for a mother and her children if her husband left her, plus the immediate need for emotional support would cause many women to move in with a man offering these things long before she was ready for a new relationship and before her marriage had had a fair chance for reconciliation.

Few houses are available for rent. A number of these are shacks with no running water, some without electricity. One family with two children lived several months in a tool shed. Several families are in similar situations, some choosing a back-to-nature life-style. One family lived in a tiny motel unit for several weeks with three children, one sick, sharing the bed and the parents using a bed-chesterfield. This was during the winter months. The motel is located a few miles from town and the wife and children had no transportation while the husband worked. One family with children spent several months in one of the apartments with friends, a family of seven, both men working different shifts. Almost all company houses are now privately owned and new houses are being built almost constantly but the amount of building is unable to keep up to the demand. Attractive two or three bedroom houses with full basements are selling at $37,000 to $39,000 at this time. Building lots will be available as more property is developed. Some very good government housing schemes have been in effect in Fraser Lake, helping some families obtain housing that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

8. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The social structure of the community is complicated by cliques. Many women have expressed the opinion that cliques are formed according to husbands' positions, place of residence, clubs one belongs to, and so on, and they feel that these groups are unapproachable. It is commonly stated amongst apartment dwellers that people in houses do not associate with them. One woman who has been in an apartment for four years says her neighbours keep leaving and new ones coming and she would like to make friends with more permanent residents. She feels that women lose interest in her as soon as she mentions that she lives in the apartments. One woman who lived in the apartments and made friends there later moved to a house. She stated her friends made comments about her moving to "snob hill" and did not visit her in spite of her continued invitations. She felt very alone and hurt. Another couple who have moved into a house say that very few of the people who visited them while they lived in an apartment visit them now. Several women have felt that the lack of mixing socially is largely due to shiftwork. People do not drop in on each other unexpectedly unless they keep in touch because they may interrupt a shiftworker's sleep or catch the family at a bad time. Shift workers find it difficul to associate with people on different shifts especially when their days off are in the middle of the week.

Several native women were asked how they felt about the community. One woman said she thought there was a lack of acceptance and prejudice equally by the whites and by the natives. One woman said she lived here several months and was invited to join coffee groups or to just visit neighbours but she felt unacceptable because she was native. Now she feels there is not a lot of prejudice in Fraser Lake, and that she does not have to "accept the judgement of bigots."

Women of other cultures have difficulties finding a place where they are comfortable and where they can meet and socialize with Canadian women. Some do not speak any English and there is no language program available at this time.

9. PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION

Fraser Lake residents often feel uninformed about decisions made by council, problems concerning the school, medical services, and other issues, and they feel uninformed about activities and when events are to take place. There is difficulty in communications as there is no local newspaper. The weekly newspaper from Vanderhoof includes a section for Fraser Lake. Advertising in it involves arrangements with Vanderhoof which is almost forty miles away. There is no local radio station. There is a morning program for Fraser Lake, but most people indicated that they listened more to CBC and got their news coverage from T.V. Again, the radio program is from Vanderhoof. The other method of communication is the bulletin boards in the shopping center. These are used a great deal to advertise coming events and things wanted for purchase, or things for sale. There are many complaints of advertisements being pulled down.

10. ADJUSTMENT

For those who have made the adjustment, have housing, adequate incomes, and satisfying activities and relationships, living in Fraser Lake can be a rewarding experience. Many are enthusiastic about the countryside and the many opportunities for winter and summer outdoor activities such as skiing, snowshoeing, skating, curling, snow-golf, hiking, riding, boating, fishing, tennis, golf, et cetera.

Opportunities do exist here but many people arrive here completely unprepared. For many, familiar occupations are non-existent. There is no cinema, bowling alley, swimming pool, window shopping opportunities, comparative shopping, specialized or expanded businesses, variety of job opportunities, cultural activities or entertainment, or intellectual opportunities. For the new-comer, friends and family are miles away, everything is strange, and people seem unapproachable. Where do women make contacts? If they are working they make contacts at work but often this does not lead to social connections. In most cases husbands go to work leaving their wives alone with children for their only company. Several women have said that they have met other women through their children but often these women find they have nothing in common except children.

Clubs and associations want to build their memberships but they are not well advertised and usually lonely people have difficulty approaching unknown groups on their own. Many women who have not participated in organized groups feel self-conscious and incompetent. Several people said they have felt out of place and uncomfortable when they attempted to join a club, since the established group members seemed so used to one another and what they were doing that they were perhaps unaware of the need for the new-comer to the group to be made welcome, to be informed of what the group is doing, and to feel that there is interest in them and that they are included. One woman who has grown children finds herself unable to make the adjustment since she likes window shopping and attractive cafes and the activities of a large town. She now finds she is usually unable to get up before about three o'clock p.m. and finds it difficult to get dressed to go out at all. One teacher said there are problems with some children arriving late because their mothers seem unable to get up to get their children off to school. Some women are very withdrawn and are seldom seen

outside their apartments or homes, some homes have their drapes always closed. One usually active young woman moved to Fraser Lake in the summer when most of the clubs were not operating. She said she spent days wandering around the shopping centre unable to meet anyone and feeling very frustrated and angry. Her husband was active at work making new acquaintances and using his skills while she had given up her profession and was finding nothing to occupy her. In desperation she took a job in Burns Lake and drove the eighty miles daily.

11. PLACES OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

One of the major problems in Fraser Lake is an inability to make social contacts. Places of interaction are limited. There is one beer parlour. Two women who are new in town like to go out occasionally while their husbands babysit. They both feel that a beer parlour is usually a good place to meet people but they say that they are treated in a manner meant to discourage them from being in the beer parlour unescourted. A single parent said that the only place where she was able to meet single men was the beer parlour. The cafes are not conducive to socializing unless contacts have already been made. There is no restaurant or lounge decorated to give an evening out or special atmosphere. The Legion is the other social centre open Friday and Saturday nights for social evenings. The only music is a juke box although there is now an attempt to start a talent evening. Bingo games and card nights are held on alternating weeks. Dances with a band are held usually once a month.

The recreation complex is active with curling, hockey, broomball and figure skating. However, public skating is held at awkward times. The rink is open Monday and Friday for

an hour at noon, Wednesday at 2:00 to 3:40 p.m. when children are in school and many preschoolers have a nap, and Friday from 6:20 to 8:20 p.m. Public skating is one of the few places teenagers can go on dates but the time is early. Three mothers commented on the lack of supervision. One mother was knocked off her feet by enthusiastic youngsters and she decided it was unsafe for her young child. One parent said that a roped off section for young children had worked well in the past and wondered why it was discontinued. It has been suggested that skating can be a family sport and families expressed the wish that more time was set for it. Dances are held fairly frequently at the complex sponsored by various clubs. Usually people stay in small groups and do not socialize outside the group. It is not a place where new-comers could easily fit in.

12. ORGANIZATIONS AND CLUBS

There are many organizations and clubs in town, most of which would like new members. Some have difficulty staying in operation because of lack of interest. The following list of organizations may be incomplete. There is a Recreation Commission, Women's Center, Women's Institute, P.T.A., Hospital Association, Legion, Ladies Auxillary to the Legion, Lions, (women are involved), Chamber of Commerce, T.O.P.S. (weight reducing club), Badminton Club, Tennis Club, Curling Club, Soccer Club, Baseball Clubs, Citizen Band Radio Club, Down-hill and Cross-country Ski Clubs, Saddle Club, Figure Skating Club, Hockey Clubs, Booster Club (club to support minor hockey), Broomball Club, Brownies, Guides, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, Golf and Country Club, Literary Club, Volunteer Fire Department, and church organizations.

Adult education courses are available, ceramics is privately run for public participation, and a pool and games

room is in operation. Fraser Lake has an excellent, well run library with Prince George and Vancouver library books available through it.

13. CONCERNS OF MOTHERS

Mothers expressed concern for their children's safety, creative and cultural experiences, and physical, social, and educational development.

There are four playgrounds in the community including the school grounds, all equipped with swings, slides and see-saws. These do not have any creative play equipment. During the winter months they are not cleared of snow. There are no sidewalks and children usually play on the streets. Toddlers ride tricycles there, older children learn to ride bicycles, others skip, throw frisbies, play ball or stand around in groups. In winter children practice hockey and ride sleighs. Cars often have to stop while children move out of the way. Not all parents allow their children to join the others in playing on the streets, but many feel there is little choice; besides, "everyone else does." Icy winter roads with banks of snow are dangerous for any pedestrians and mothers with babies in sleighs often feel vulnerable.

There are few creative or cultural opportunities. There is figure skating and dance lessons available for figure skating students. There are no cultural films or productions. Music lessons are usually unavailable although the school provides music opportunities.

There are a great number of opportunities for sports and physical activities. Children of even limited ability can participate fully.

Several mothers have expressed their concern about their childrens' development. Socially, chilren seem to mingle well, but several parents feel that too many children are growing up with little guidance and expressed concern regarding such problems as vandalism. One parent expressed her feeling of the need for Big Brother and Big Sister organizations to help youngsters with problems.

There are no opportunities for children to see a choice of occupations and lifestyles. The Recreation Director provides as many experiences as he can but he must rely on volunteer help from parents and other adults. This is often difficult to obtain. For cross-country ski or snow-shoe expeditions he may have fifteen young people and no adults to provide transportation. Trips to Prince George for a swim and a show may include a bus load of children and one extra adult. Parents who do assist in planning and running children's activities complain repeatedly of this problem, and feel particularly resentful of any criticism if things go wrong.

Another concern for mothers is the lack of job opportunities for students and young adults. Once young people have left school they may try to get employment locally or they may further their schooling which means leaving the area, or they may have to look for employment elsewhere. It is difficult for most young people to make the sudden transition from the security of home and school to a location miles from family where they have to make adjustments in every area of their lives. If they remain in Fraser Lake they may wait indefinitely for employment. One young woman took babysitting jobs at one dollar an hour while spending eighteen months filling in applications and going for interviews. Many girls marry early.

14. CONCERNS OF HOMEMAKERS

Concerns of homemakers include problems with husbands' shifts, shopping facilities, servicing and transportation.

Shiftwork is thought to be the single most destructive force to family and community life. Shiftwork disrupts family life tremendously. Men on shifts with days off on week days (except once a month when days off fall on week-ends) can spend little time with their children especially if the children are in school. They cannot take week-ends away with their families. When they are on afternoon shift they do not see their school-aged children for the entire shift. If they have pre-school children, the children have to be restricted in their play while their father is sleeping. Some mothers take their children out and mark time to try to give their men a chance to rest. One woman spends hours driving around with her active preschooler going nowhere while her husband sleeps. Most social activities are arranged on a schedule that suits day shift workers. Shift work makes it difficult for couples to attend any activity on a regular basis, and it eliminates the opportunity to attend dances and other social functions most of the time. Friends are often reluctant to stop by or phone in case they disturb the shift worker. Several families work shifts with the husband on one shift and the wife on another. Sometimes this is done so one parent is home with the children at all times.

Many women complain about the shopping facilities. Common complaints are that prices are too high, produce and dairy products are not fresh, selection is limited and many everyday household necessities are unavailable. Most residents would like to see competition in business. One business person

expressed some of his difficulties. One month's snow-clearing bill can be two hundred dollars, a freight bill on one double plate window was almost ninety-nine dollars, et cetera.

Servicing is difficult to get. One woman who purchased a stove in Prince George had problems with it. The store would not send anyone out to fix it until several months later when someone came out on a fishing trip.

Although there is a good taxi service in Fraser Lake, transportation for people without vehicles is a problem. Stores do not make deliveries, and articles arriving by freight are not delivered to homes. Many needs cannot be met in Fraser Lake and sometimes it is necessary to go to Prince George. The Greyhound buses leave at five o'clock a.m. and at 8:03 p.m. and return at 12:52 a.m. and 10:22 a.m. For mothers these times are particularly inconvenient. It is too long a day for children to spend travelling and in town, and babysitters are hard to get and costly for a twenty hour period. The Canadian National Railroad has a passenger service leaving Endako at 3:40 a.m. on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and returning at 2:30 a.m. Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. In order to use this, transportation would have to be arranged to Endako, twelve miles away.

Another problem for the family is where to spend time together. There are playgrounds where the family can play ball games and so on, and there is a very pleasant provincial camp ground and picnic site on Fraser Lake about ten miles east of the community. It is a place for swimming, picnicking and recreation during the summer months. However, it is often filled by tourists and it is unavailable to people without transportation. There are natural sites where people

can set up camps but several women have expressed fears of wild animals and a strong dislike of blackflies and mosquitos. The community itself has no campsites, picnic areas or beaches.

15. MEDICAL SERVICES

There are two doctors working at the Fraser Lake Medical Clinic. The nearest hospital is in Vanderhoof, 40 miles away. If local patients are hospitalized in Vanderhoof they are necessarily transferred to another doctor without choice as Fraser Lake doctors do not have "hospital rights" in Vanderhoof. In Vanderhoof babies are delivered by the doctor on call, usually a total stranger to Fraser Lake residents. Many women are self-conscious or frightened when they have their babies. They spend many weeks developing a confidence in their doctor and they state that when the delivery time arrives it can be very uncomfortable to be in a strange situation surrounded by strangers. The distance to the hospital creates other problems. One man had a head injury at the mine and was taken by ambulance to the hospital for treatment. He arrived as the X-ray technicians were preparing to leave. They did not X-ray his head until they returned for work the following morning. One of the concerns about not having a local hospital is the fear of a serious accident at the mine. There may not be time to get the injured to the hospital, especially if a number of employees are involved as the ambulance service is limited.

There are no laboratory facilities in Fraser Lake and most lab work is sent to a private laboratory in Prince George that gives excellent and immediate service. One of the doctors said that other laboratories he has dealt with do not

consistently phone results to him or handle them promptly. If the doctor has to wait for results to come by mail it may take four days during which time the patient would not receive perhaps essential medication.

The Fraser Lake Health Society has been attempting to have a hospital built in Fraser Lake. Apparently a hospital will not be built but a diagnostic and treatment center will replace the present medical clinic.

16. WOMEN'S CENTRE

One of the local doctors stated that the single most extensive evidence of problems is family breakdown. He feels that the lack of extended families is the primary cause and that acceptable agencies to provide substitutes are needed.

Extended families may provide emotional support, and people to talk with about personal problems. When there is a problem between a husband and wife there may be a mutually respected member of the family who can guide them to solutions, they often provide practical help when someone is ill or when something goes wrong, they often provide temporary financial aid when it is needed. They may babysit for the children, giving them a chance to develop healthy relationships with other adults, helping them learn acceptable behavior, helping them feel they have a place in the community, and they relieve the parents from the total burden of child care. Sometimes they provide opportunities for parents to be alone to relax or time to pursue other interests without the constant interruptions and responsibility of children.

Acceptable agencies are needed to provide substitutes. People need concerned people to listen to their personal difficulties, they need self-help programs, they need help in

times of illness such as home care services, they need financial and legal aid at times, they need opportunities for their children's social development and they need time for themselves.

Counselling services are badly needed. The immediate problems of living in the community may create demands on and stresses between husbands and wives that can result in family breakdown.

There are no government agencies stationed in Fraser Lake to help residents cope with problems or to assist in times of crisis.

The Women's Center is an attempt to meet the many needs of the Fraser Lake residents. It provides active listening that is kept confidential for personal and family problems, counselling regarding wife and child battering, drug counselling. It is a contact for the crisis centre in Prince George. It provides opportunities for self-image development, has consciousness raising talk sessions, brings in qualified speakers on self-help programs, suggests reading material and has some available. It acts as a resource centre and has files on contacts for almost any information. It provides job opportunity and job-training opportunity information. It provides debt counselling, ombudsman services, and rentalsman service. It provides U.I.C., human rights, and consumer affairs information. It is a contact for legal aid. It co-ordinates community resources. It provides information on local clubs and has started a community calendar. It is a drop-in centre and a place where people of different cultures can meet. Men as well as women are always welcome. An average of three hundred twenty-five people per month use the centre.

Opportunities for other projects and activities abound. It is a place where nursery, daycare, teenage activities, improved shopping facilities, crafts and creative ideas, et cetera, could be discussed and put into action. The unfortunate thing about the Women's Centre is that funding depends on the whim of governments so its future is always insecure. With such essential services being provided by one organization it is vital that it have security.

The Women's Centre is a contact for and it provides transportation to the Phoenix Transition House in Prince George. The transition house is a place for women that have been battered, raped or have had their children beaten or have drug or alcohol problems or have any personal problems and have nowhere to go. The transition house has suggested that the Women's Centre create its own transition house because of the large number of referrals from Fraser Lake. Unfortunately there are no facilities available.

The Women's Centre takes many distress calls at night and during the week-ends. Some of these calls involve a man threatening the lives of his family with a gun, battering his wife or children, adolescent rebellion, suicide threats or attempts, emergency hospitalization with the need for immediate child care, drug abuse, and so on.

The Women's Centre has found housing for young people who had to move out of their own homes because of family disputes, or others simply in need of housing, has counselled children who have suffered family breakdown and has counselled children in cases when a parent is dying, has died or has committed suicide. A founder of the local Women's Centre has spent many nights with young people helping them come through bad trips on drugs.

The Women's Centre has been effective in regaining income for many people who have suddenly been cut off Unemployment Insurance or social assistance without notice and who have no other options. A single parent of three children with no income finds it virtually impossible to go to Prince George to argue her case with a government office.

The Women's Centre has provided care for the elderly in times of illness, and for women recuperating from operations, and a place to sleep for women who are afraid or have no immediate place to go.

For many the Women's Centre has led to social contacts, intellectual stimulation, greater social awareness, more self-knowledge, improved self-esteem, and the development of social skills. Unfortunately many people in the community regard the Women's Centre as unacceptable, a place for "strange women," women with unpleasant problems, or "Women's Liberation freaks." This attitude by some women have influenced others to stay away. One new-comer to town wanted to make social contacts. She was acquainted with two families who did not know what other clubs were in town except the curling club. She had seen the Women's Centre sign and asked about it and was warned away from it. She was told, "Only crazy people go there." She was determined to find out for herself but felt very insecure about it. Another new-comer who tried to find out from a mine supervisor what the Women's Centre did was told that she would not want to go there, it was only for crazy people. She had been to other Women's Centres, however, and was not so easily discouraged. Both women are now active participants in the centre.

The local Chamber of Commerce has recently obtained new funding for the project: Fraser Lake Information and Resource Centre. The project will employ five workers, two for Tourist Information and related work, one as a liaison worker between the Resource Centre and the native Indian people, and two workers to continue the essential work of the Women's Centre in the Resource Centre.

17. RECOMMENDATIONS

Many people feel that the solution to many of the diverse problems of a single resource community such as Fraser Lake would be a complete Resource Centre.

A multi-roomed unit consisting of an interaction or drop-in centre, a games room, children's play room, crafts room, club room, et cetera, where new-comers could make social contacts, where shift workers could socialize during the mornings or afternoons, where mothers with small children could relax, and where housewives who have at present nowhere to go could plan and put into effect innumerable projects. It could be a place where small businesses could operate, and it could be a place where workshops could be located. Community services such as counselling, Human Resources, Public Health would operate from the same building.

The Women's Centre, soon to be known as the Resource Centre, is attempting to provide most of these services from a tiny two-room office.

It is also strongly felt that funds for the operation of a project like this should be of a permanent nature.

Businesses

It has been suggested that a low cost commercial development could be constructed so small boutiques and shops would be possible.

Employment

An organization should be formed that would prepare women for work in mining and lumbering both emotionally and physically. The organization could set up an accident prevention program. The organization could work with the mine, the sawmill, and the unions, encouraging awareness of women's problems in gaining entry to the labour force, particularly in non-traditional areas.

Jobs should be created for students, for young adults entering the work force, for women in general, and for wives of employed men.

Housing

More rental units should be made available. Private investment in rental units should be encouraged.

Social Structure

Clubs should become aware of the needs they could meet more effectively through better publicity.

An interaction place is needed where there could be socializing between cliques and various cultural groups.

A language program should be available to the non-English speaking residents.

Communications

A small community paper should be encouraged.

Recreation

In the present ice arena, many mothers would like to see greater supervision during public skating, and a roped-off section for beginner skaters.

The arena floor should be cemented for summer sports such as roller skating and indoor tennis, and for social activities such as dances, fairs, and festivals.

A picnic site, camp ground and public beach are needed in or near the community.

Many people have expressed interest in an indoor swimming pool.

Young Children

If children are to continue to play on the streets it is felt that the streets should be clearly marked that children are at play and a slow speed limit should be imposed. Speed bumps have been suggested especially since some drivers drag-race through the community. If children are to stay off the streets, then more play ground should be made available, especially the adventure playground type, and sidewalks should be put in. Playgrounds should be kept clear in winter.

Services for small children should be created such as childminding, nursery school, and day-care.

Big Brother organizations should be formed and other support systems for the numerous children of single parent families and families in difficult situations.

Shiftwork

The possibility of more acceptable shifts should be considered.

Some social activities should be geared to shift work.

A social centre should be created where shiftworkers could take their families during their off hours, particularly during the winter months. A place should be available where mothers of young children can go, particularly during the day when shiftworkers are sleeping and the children are active.

Involvement

It is strongly recommended that women attend public meetings of Village Council, Recreation Board, Health Society, School Board, P.T.A.' and any other decision making organizations, and that women become aware of all community affairs.

It is recommended that women take positions on these councils and boards, and that they organize to discuss problems and attempt to implement solutions.

NORTHERN B.C. WOMEN'S TASK FORCE ON SINGLE INDUSTRY RESOURCE COMMUNITIES.

MACKENZIE REPORT

JOAN KOTARSKI

1977

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Lorraine March.

Special thanks to Sandra Wilkins, Gill Shannon and Karen Klausen.

Special mention to a special person, Diana Ellis.

And thank you to all the women in the North who shared feelings, stories, hopes and dreams.

I. LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Mackenzie is an isolated instant northern single resource town, located 620 miles north of Vancouver in the interior of British Columbia in the Rocky Mountain Trench. Mackenzie exists because of the W.A.C. Bennett dam at Hudson's Hope which created Williston Lake and provided the power source for the B.C. Forest Products lumber operations. (See the Mackenzie Story prepared for the Citizens Committee of Mackenzie, B.C., by Trade Union Research Bureau, Vancouver, B.C., for a more complete account of the building of Mackenzie.) The town was built to house the employees of the lumber operations. The town is now ten years old and there are 5,313 (Census Canada 1976) people living here. It is modern, it is clean, it looks like a subdivision of a larger city but it isn't. Our nearest larger city, Prince George, is 120 miles away and Mackenzie is 18 miles off the main highway on a dead end road, completely surrounded by trees. The Hart Highway between Prince George and Mackenzie is a treacherous road; narrow, very curvy and in winter can be very dangerous with ice and snow. There are a lot of logging and other large trucks using the road. When spring comes, the road breaks and large pot-holes and bumps add to the discomfort of a 2½ - 3 hour drive to town. Bad road conditions are a fact of life in the north. There is no regular air service to Mackenzie at present except the company (B.C.Forest Products) jet. There are plans for a 3-times weekly flight to Prince George beginning June 1st, 1977, but the cost of $22.00 one way is prohibitive for most people. The company jet provides only limited service but can be used for emergencies. The nearest regular air service is in Prince George. There is no passenger rail service in Mackenzie. Again we have to go to Prince George. There is a daily (except Saturday) evening bus service to Prince George but we lack a daily round trip bus service. As one can see, transportation in and out of Mackenzie is difficult and expensive. Unless a woman has a car of her

own, or access to the family vehicle, it is impossible for her to travel to Prince George for a day without the added expense and inconvenience of an overnight stay.

2. RECREATION

Mackenzie is located in a beautiful scenic part of northern British Columbia. It is ironic that Williston Lake, billed as the 'biggest dammed lake in the world' is totally useless for recreational purposes. Biggest it may be but certainly not best. The lake site was never properly cleared of timber, making boating hazardous, and its size and location between the mountains create extremely strong winds. It is a dangerous lake to use. Luckily, there are many natural lakes ideal for recreational use near by. Most people make use of these lakes and the abundant wildlife for numerous fishing, hunting, hiking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and just "see-nature" trips. We are close (42 miles) to Pine Pass in the Rockies and Azu Ski Village located there boasts of the best, but as yet undiscovered, (except by local downhill skiers) snow fields in the world. Within the town itself, there is a small ski hill and tow and Morfee Lake is within walking distance where boating and swimming facilities are located. The town also has a heated outdoor pool, an arena, curling rink and an outdoor ice rink. There is a recreation commission for citizen input and a good recreation department. There are many organizations and clubs to join ranging from chess to judo.

A. PROBLEMS

Recreation as such is not a problem in Mackenzie.. what is a problem is making use of what is available. There would be more use of existing facilities like the arena, ski hill and swimming pool, if some kind of childcare was provided along with the activity. The childcare doesn't have to be as sophisticated or as structured as a daycare centre, but could be set up as needed when people who register

for activities require the extra service to be able to participate. This should be a fundamental service provided by the Recreation department for any daytime activity.

There is also a need for a community centre which could house a multi-use conference meeting area. This facility could include an indoor swimming pool which is wanted by the residents. Within this swimming pool/meeting building any number of activities could take place provided adequate storage space and proper planning of space suited to the needs of the community, was given credence. (Note: a grant has been obtained from Secretary of State to ascertain needs of community, and feasibility of constructing such a building for the summer of '77).

A women's co-ordinator and information centre should be included in the community centre plan. The phenomenon of 'cabin fever' feeling closed-in, isolated and trapped, has been talked about in connection with women living in the north. There is a definite need for this type of service especially as the majority of women are at home with small children or unable to find employment. It would give women an opportunity to get involved in the community. The entire community centre project would give a central base from which to establish other activities. Here, the woman's co-ordinator, women's centre and childcare centre could be located. The childcare could become a part of the daycare which should be given space as well. Living in Mackenzie is often the first experience of living in the north; and quite often the first experience of living away from the hometown. It can be a lonely and frightening experience. With a community centre, problems like these could be helped. In other words, what is needed and wanted, is an active, functioning community centre with total emphasis on the needs

of the people and a particular focus on meeting the needs of women in the community.

3. THE PEOPLE

Most of the people who live in Mackenzie are white anglo-saxon with a mixture of religious experience. The majority of the people are second and third generation Canadians and share a common social value system. That is, most of us share the great North American dream of family, house, car, not necessarily in that order. Food, shelter, clothing are taken for granted. In other words, a consumer society where possessions make a statement about one's life. The average person in town is married with two children and is about 25 years old for women and about 30 years old for men. There are not many old people here. This isn't a town people retire in unless it is to come and live with their married children and their family. The average person, man or woman, has completed high school and has some further training or education.

A. ETHNIC GROUPS

There is a large East Indian community, in relation to the total population of Mackenzie, of about 200 people from the Punjab and about 20 Hindu. The two groups do not mix well and there have been altercations between them, sometimes leading to injuries. Almost all of this group work for Fraser Forest Industries or Carrier Lumber. One person who has contact with the East Indians feels that English classes for both men and women would be beneficial in easing them into the community. There is some underlying prejudice towards these people and perhaps if they could communicate better with the English-speaking majority some of that prejudice could be eradicated. The women in particular could benefit, as the men can obviously understand enough to work. There isn't much opportunity for women to

learn or use any English as they are very shy and tend to stay together. A real effort to involve them in the community is needed.

As well as East Indians, there are people from all over the world but not in any great number. There are people from Denmark, South America, Germany, Poland, and other parts of Canada.

B. NATIVE POPULATION

In the immediate vicinity around Mackenzie there is not a large native population. The natives do not come to Mackenzie in any large numbers, and Indian involvement with the community and our involvement with the Indians is very small. The Public Health Unit located in Mackenzie administers some health needs to the native settlements in our area. There is some contact via native children, mainly through the high school, and with native children who go into foster homes. The main contacts are through government institutions and not usually on a person-to-person basis.

C. NEWCOMERS

The following is a young mother's account of coming to live in Mackenzie. Reading it, you notice that although she is an outgoing, friendly person she found it difficult to meet people. The woman's centre was a starting point for her to make friends and find out what the town had to offer. Unfortunately, the woman's centre is no longer functioning due to a lack of funds and availability of space. One reason for the centre's popularity was because one could

bring children along. There was no need to find a baby-sitter, which is especially difficult during the day. The centre made available a bright space for the children to play, provided toys and someone to supervise, making it a real break for mothers, as well as providing information on activities in town. The idea of having a central place for women to meet on a drop-in basis and having a play area for children provided, is essential for the well being of the women in this town. A child-minding centre has to be available if women are to be able to take advantage of any of the recreational activities provided by the community. The concept of a centre regardless of the focus can be utilized by everyone. It can be a place to make friends, find information, share ideas and problems. It can be the extra support for people, particularly women, that we lack by not having family and old friends close by.

> "When we moved to Mackenzie I had already made up my mind to love the place, no matter what it was like. We didn't know a soul and I think if I didn't have that attitude I still might not know anyone.
>
> My husband was working with a department store and luckily the manager's wife and myself became good friends. She had been here for about eight months and hardly knew anyone herself!
>
> While the Welcome Wagon hostess was making her visit she told me of the town's 'Women's Centre.' I told her I would have to drop in and promptly put it out of my mind. However, later in the week she called to tell me that the centre was showing slides about the growth of the town and would I like a ride! I attended and enjoyed myself immensely. All the women there were relatively new to the town and in the same position as myself.
>
> I found that the women that had lived here for sometime already had their own circle of friends and didn't really bother to meet newcomers. The first house we lived in for five months and I never did meet my neighbours. I know my present neighbours but only because I went over myself and practically forced myself on them!

> I think if a person isn't particularly outgoing, Mackenzie could be a very horrible experience for them. You really have to make an effort to meet people. I feel the Women's Centre was instrumental in my making friends. It gave me a place to go and talk to other young women like myself. Through the Women's Centre I have made several very good friends."

The idea for a women's centre that would exist in conjunction with the Recreation department was part of a Local Initiatives Project grant application. The centre was housed in the changing rooms of the outdoor swimming pool which had two big rooms with no windows and a smaller central room with one window that was partially boarded up for the winter. Adequate heat was finally supplied by mid-February in time for the opening of the centre. Even this space was shared by a Teen Centre that operated weekends and in the evenings. So the women's centre was open only during the day. The centre had to close down in May (although there was money until the end of June) because the swimming pool would soon be opening for the summer. The centre moved to the basement of a private citizen's home in hopes that another space would be found. This has not happened yet. The centre, despite the space difficulties, had good support and functioned well, providing a much needed and well used service for women.

4. COMMUNITY SERVICES

In the northern part of British Columbia there are not many towns. The north is still a frontier area. Most people think that to go north to live is a hardship only endured because of job transfer or to make money. No one thinks that they will remain in Mackenzie for a long time (10 to 15 years), consequently services which are taken for granted in the south are missing from Mackenzie. We end up making do with what we have and trying to add needed services. A few people work hard at adding services to the community, often without immediate success, but because of the transitory nature of the community, these community-minded people are always leaving and a lot of impetus is lost. It seems that the same groundwork as to be covered again and again.

Medical services are provided by two dentists in town, two public health nurses, three doctors and recently a physiotherapist. There are two visiting optometrists who usually come every month and a pediatrician comes once in a while. For anything else, a specialist of any kind, it is necessary to go to Prince George. There is a small hospital but for anything serious or special treatment we have to go to Prince George.

There is a probation officer and a Human Resources officer in town. Luckily for our town, both are extremely community-minded, and have helped out many local projects.

A. TUESDAY MORNING DROP-IN

A group of women who have survived the turnover of people and the passing of time is the Ladies Tuesday Morning Drop-In. It meets every Tuesday morning, 9 - 12, from October to

April. All women are invited and a nominal fee of $1 for women without children and $1.50 for women with children is charged. The children are kept in the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada union hall where babysitters, toys, juice and cookies are provided. The union does not charge a rent to the group. The women are then free to enjoy themselves at the Drop-In. Conversation, speakers, crafts projects and community outings are all part of a varied program throughout the year. This group, after four years of existence, is enjoying tremendous success.

B. CHURCH GROUPS

Each church organization has a women's group who meet regularly. There are many projects that these type of groups undertake and many are similar to church organizations found everywhere. The Tuesday Morning Drop-In grew out of an idea of one of the church groups. These type of groups are often the backbone of the community and provide a place for friendships and Christian interests to interact.

C. DAYCARE

The Mackenzie Day Care Society is a duly licensed and incorporated society with the object of providing and administering daycare facilities on a non-profit basis. The daycare started in the winter of '75 - '76 and is housed in the basement of a church. It is able to handle 20 children at a time. It takes children only from the age of 3, but does take one or two toddlers if special arrangements have been made. The daycare has barely survived. At the present time it has to hire a qualified daycare worker to remain open but it lacks sufficient funds and is hoping for

an approval of a grant application. The charges for the daycare are $7 for one child for a 9-hour day, $10 per 9-hour day for 2 children, and the hourly rate is $1. Unfortunately, our daycare has received unfavorable comments. A lot has to do with not having a qualified daycare worker to set up programs and a lot has to do with having to use a basement. It isn't the bright, cheerful, activity filled centre most would like to see the daycare become, but it is a start. It doesn't receive the support it should. A lot of working mothers take their children to a private home believing that their children will receive better care than in a daycare. There is a great amount of education needed concerning the needs of a pre-schooler and how those needs can be better met by a daycare. Women need to be informed as to what a daycare really is all about. Again, a childminding centre would be a good place to start with the information. (Note) - At time of completion of this report the daycare has received a Canada Works Grant and been able to hire a qualified daycare worker and 4 other staff members.

5. THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The plan of Mackenzie is the work of a Vancouver planner, Des Parker. The District of Mackenzie still consults with Mr. Parker and he visits at least once a year in person for consultation with city officials and administrators. The town has a central street, Mackenzie Boulevard and it is intersected by two large streets, Centennial Drive and Stuart Drive. The residential areas are off these two streets. Along Mackenzie Boulevard and just on either side is the commercial and light industrial area. This includes gas stations, retail stores, restaurants, car sales, dry cleaning, government offices, city hall, fire

station, etc. There are no neighbourhood stores. There are three elementary schools and one high school. The high school is located on Skeena Drive across from the shopping mall and adjacent to the arena/curling rink/library buildings. The elementary schools are in the residential areas but some parents are angry about how and where they were built. One parent had this to say, "The architect for the schools should be sentenced to walk on crutches in the worst storms to any of the three elementary schools." She notes that all are in hazardous locations on blind curves and two on main residential throughways. She dislikes the 'windowless, barren atmosphere' or 'the windows that never open' and feels that this is unhealthy. There are many concerns of parents about the schools and the school system.

Mackenzie is part of the Prince George School District #57 and this creates a great deal of problems. For instance, to go to a school board meeting involves driving 120 miles to Prince George and then back. At the last election of school board trustees, a strong campaign in Mackenzie to elect a local representative to the school board succeeded and for the first time there is a citizen of Mackenzie on the board.

The dental clinic, hospital, ambulance service, and the public health unit are located close together on Centennial Drive near the shopping mall. The three doctors are in separate residential houses in three locations.

The main industrial area is located 5 miles away from the town. The B.C. Railway, airport, FFI, B.C. Forest Products, etc., are located on the Mill Road. Everyone approves of keeping the heavy industrial area separate from the residential area, thus keeping noise and air pollution away.

A. TRANSPORTATION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Even though the town is small and distances walkable except to the industrial site, everyone drives everywhere. The weather and children are the major reasons for this. The winters are long and snowy, the spring very muddy and there is abundant rainfall. All this makes walking with children difficult. It takes a long time (try walking with a toddler!) to get anywhere, and in winter when streets get narrower due to accumulated snow, it can be extremely hazardous. There is no local bus service and although taxis are not as expensive as other areas (95¢ to start, 60¢ each mile), they are still expensive. There are only five cabs and sometimes there can be a long wait.

To get to the main work area, 5 miles away, most men take their cars, leaving the woman stuck at home. To live in Mackenzie it is essential to own one vehicle, and often necessary to own two.

B. HOUSING

(For a complete background to the building of the town, land grants, etc., please see The Mackenzie Story, prepared by the Trade Union Research Bureau, Vancouver, B.C.)

The houses in Mackenzie were built to house the employees of the major industry--lumber. The two major companies, BCFP and FFI, built homes especially for their employees because no one else would. According to the companies they do not wish to be in the real estate business but are forced into it. In any event, the houses are sold to employees with a small down payment. Two years ago the minimum down payment was $500, now it is $1,000 and a special re-purchase agreement.

The total price for homes range from $25,000 (a small 3-bedroom or 2-bedroom home about 800 sq. ft.) to $50,000 (for a 3-bedroom, over 1,000 sq. ft.) through the company. On the open market most homes are in the mid $30,000 range, with the occasional home around $60,000. The payments for company homes are taken off the employee's pay cheque twice a month. One has to live in a company house for five years while working for the company in order to be considered the owner. At the end of the 5 years one has the option to sell the house on the open market or sell back to the company. The company has to buy back the house for up to 10 years, if the owner is still employed by the company. If an employee wishes to leave before the 5 years are up, the company takes the house giving the employee back his down payment, plus principal paid, plus money for any improvements to the home. Where the owner is not satisfied with money alloted for improvements there can be an appeal made and an independent assessment will take place.

In the recent past an ex-employee of the company tried to contest the idea of giving up ownership of the home when he was no longer employed by the company and before the 5 year limit was up, in the courts. The judge ruled in favour of the company.

The physical appearance of the houses is a standard 3-bedroom bungalow with variations to the floor plan. All have basements, most have carports and some have garages. There are some 2-storey, a lot of split-level, but most are single level homes. The exteriors differ in color and design and the neighbourhoods are mixed so that it isn't row on row of the same thing. The interior of the new houses are painted basic white, and wall-to-wall carpeting

is provided in most of the homes in the living-room and hall. The front yard is levelled and seeded with grass but the back is left for the owner. Sometimes it is left quite badly with tree stumps and deep holes. Most people try to improve their homes and grounds especially if they feel they will be staying for a while.

Other housing available to employees of BCFP are condominiums, townhouses and apartment buildings. FFI also owns an apartment building and keeps some for employees' use and the rest is rented out.

There are two other privately-owned apartment buildings. There are also rooms available in private homes, usually one room or basement apartment. There is not much choice for people who do not work for the company and rents are generally high even for a company apartment. ($180 for a bachelor suite - BCFP).

BCFP also owns one of the three trailer courts but it is not restricted to just employees. The trailer courts have very small lots; bad road conditions inside the courts, and poor play areas for children. No wonder the trailer owners often feel like second-class citizens. Often, the opinion people have of others is shaped by where the "others" live, and, there seems to be a stigma attached to those who live in a trailer as though it isn't as good as living in a house. Trailer courts could easily be improved. Enlarged lot areas, play and park areas should be included. Because trailers come fully equipped and are easily moved, they are an ideal housing unit for the north where problems with high cost of transportation of goods, high cost of building houses, etc. seem to make trailers a better economic value.

With the mentioned improvements trailer courts could be esthetically pleasing and more suited to the women and children who spend so many long hours in them.

BCFP and FFI, but mostly BCFP, lease homes to the school district, hospital board, dental board, the Hudson Bay Company, and the District of Mackenzie, for the use of their employees. In some cases the lessees pay most of the rent and then rent to their employees at a reduced rate; in other cases there isn't any subsidy and the rent is quite high. (can be $400 per month for a 1,000 sq. ft. 3-bedroom home).

There has been no plan to keep management and worker homes in separate places. The neighbourhoods are mixed with expensive homes and cheaper homes. Some areas have evolved into a more exclusive area to live but most areas are on an equal footing.

Unless one is employed by BCFP or FFI or an essential service it can be very difficult to obtain a home in Mackenzie.

C. SHOPPING

The major area of shopping is in the Mackenzie mall. This is a modern enclosed shopping area, with large parking space surrounding it. There are some retail stores outside this area but everything is in a central location and close in proximity to the mall area.

Since the town is small it cannot support too many stores and it is difficult to attract new investors. Because of the lack of competition people feel their choices are

restricted and prices are higher here than elsewhere. In some cases, gasoline for example, prices are higher here. A great number of people shop in Prince George and make the trip there often, once a month or more, summer and winter. Generally people feel that the established business people keep competition out. This was in fact once the practice (see Mackenzie Story) as an incentive to bring investors here but is reported not to be the practice now. Other factors influence investors' decisions, mostly economic. Some merchants in town state they would welcome more stores as this might keep people shopping locally.

The overcrowding of people and goods in Mackenzie stores is another reason why so many people shop outside of town. It can be very difficult to manage both shopping carts and children. I know of one child who pulled some containers on top of himself and needed stitches for a cut on his head. A child-minding centre near the main shopping area would enable mother to shop in peace and would perhaps keep more people shopping in Mackenzie as this service would be a big advantage to people.

The mall area is used as an informal meeting place. In the open area a small snack bar and tables and benches are provided. Different community groups set up booths for displays and fund raising events in the open area. During the school week students from the high school use the mall as a hangout. One store owner commented about the problem, "The shopping centre is used as a playground by the older school kids. I feel it should be off limits at lunch hours except for legitimate restaurant purposes." These older children do need more activities and a teen centre (other than those involved in organized sports or church groups.)

At noon and after school the mall is congested with students and it makes shopping harder at those times.

Since shopping is a major occupation, stores are an important part of the community. Shopping as a leisure activity, that is window shopping or browsing cannot be done here.

There is an active Chamber of Commerce and they are working on improving business and attracting more business to Mackenzie.

6. EMPLOYMENT

Mackenzie is not considered to have an unemployment problem. This is because men do not have an unemployment problem. However, there are few jobs for women. We have a local Manpower Office which opened in the spring of '76 and they often have over 200 women each month looking for work. To give an example of the competition for jobs, there were 115 applicants who wrote the Civil Service exam for a clerk position in the local Post Office, and 88 applications for 4 cashier jobs at a supermarket which just opened.

I have a first hand account of trying to get a job by a young woman who doesn't have any children; ready, able to work odd hours, shifts, etc., and qualified to be able to work in many areas and willing to work at anything.

> "I arrived in Mackenzie on Labour Day weekend, 1975. On the Tuesday I went to look for a job. Tried the banks, RCMP, and stores and other employers. I heard there was a job for a clerk at the town hall. I knew I was overqualified but wanted a job so badly that I'd apply thinking that I'd have a hard time in the interview convincing interviewer that I would

cope and would enjoy a clerk's job even though it was a long time behind me. In my interview I was told that only just having come to Mackenzie and living common-law were the reasons they couldn't hire me and would hire someone who was a long-time resident. They did and her last job had been as an office manager. She still works as clerk in the town hall.

The day the strike ended, I applied at BCFP expecting to get hired on at the mill as so many people had left town during the strike. I filled out an application form and left. I was told to keep bugging them and they would hire me. I phoned and asked for Personnel--the secretary in the Personnel area never let me speak to any of the Personnel hiring staff--all of them were always out. One day I told her off, that I wanted to talk to one of them, it was impossible they were all out. She found a Personnel staff person in his office. "We don't hire women..." "You don't hire women? Why not?" "They can't keep up to the work." "I can keep up." "How do we know?" "Hire me." "Sorry, we don't hire women."

I wrote to the Human Rights Commission and received a letter assigning a case worker to me. I then received another letter from another woman informing me that she would now be on my case. I waited and expected it would take a great deal of time. It did. I was telephoned on August 10th ,1976 and asked to go to a meeting and a gentleman came on the phone to establish how important it was that we meet. I was there in ½ an hour. It was a man from BCFP and an Industrial Relations officer from Dawson Creek representing Human Rights. He spoke to me privately telling me that he understood the problem and would try his best. The BCFP representative said that the Personnel Officer for BCFP never said they don't hire women and that women can't keep up. He commented that women are just not a good experience at BCFP in Mackenzie. The meeting lasted about one hour with the Industrial Relations gentleman agreeing in part or wholly with all the BCFP representative said. I was promised that when I went and filled in an application I would get an interview. On the Industrial Relations' officer's advice, I dropped the charges.

At the beginning of September when school was in and the transient summer population had left I went back to BCFP and filled in an application form. The secretary knew who I was and told me to wait five minutes. While I waited, my next-door neighbour's son and a 1976 graduate from high school walked into the waiting room. He had on work clothes and boots and a hard-hat with ear protectors. He was working in the mill--17 years old and had got hired on permanent a few days ago.

I went in to see the Personnel Officer and he was very sorry but "they are just not hiring right now"--when, in fact there were jobs to be found in the mills for the guys who work outside. No work now!

I've never gone back, but, they say, you can always keep trying.

In October, 1976 I was lucky enough to get hired onto a local L.I.P. grant and worked as a recreation co-ordinator until the end of May.

I work in a carpet store four afternoons a week, cleaning in the store and answering the telephone. I got the job through knowing the manager's wife and she liked to be in the position to help.

A job is a job!"

Obviously, to get a job in Mackenzie it is a combination of who you know in order to find out when there are openings and a lot of luck.

The main employers, the lumber companies, do not like to hire women. As it is against the law to discriminate on the basis of sex, the employers can get around the law very easily by just saying they pick the best qualified person. So if everything else is equal a young man who has taken 'shops' in high school will be hired over a woman who took home economics. The system is stacked against real equality on the job market. For example, at BCFP; there are about 872 workers employed (BCFP - 1976 Annual Report) in the sawmill, studmill, small log mill and kraft pulpmill. Out of that 872 there are 15 women.

Of the fifteen women working about one-third have their husbands working with the company. Another fact to note is that BCFP does not use Manpower for hiring. They use their own staff to go outside the town, the province and even the country to hire men. Preference is given to married men.

A. JOBS FILLED BY WOMEN

The type of job available to women is the usual type of work that we are used to seeing women employed at. This includes teachers, nurses, bank clerks, store clerks, secretaries, waitresses, babysitters, and in non-traditional roles as taxi drivers and gas station attendants. Several women run their own stores but the husband has to sign the lease and any bank loans have to have the husbands' signature.

For more employment to open up for women we need a second industry as well as more equitable hiring practices on the part of present industry. Secondary industry is an issue of much concern to everyone not with the main idea of providing jobs for women but rather for growth and stabilizing of the community. There is some research being done on secondary industry by the Fraser-Fort George Regional District, and the Council and Chamber of Commerce are both looking into the need for secondary industry.

As I have mentioned, BCFP or the other lumber companies do not hire women generally and those that are hired do not receive any specific training. Perhaps the company should think about having a special orientation for male workers in how to react to female workers and also the reverse. A lot of people feel that women workers cannot handle the jobs physically but this is not so.

Attitudes die hard, and many of us working today labour under the handicap of sex stereotypes. This means that women "cannot lift, carry, handle heavy objects, machinery, etc." and that men should do those things for us. If an orientation program with emphasis on these types of problems and how to handle them was given, an awareness could develop that would prevent more problems. This is very important because although men may insist on helping out on the job, eventually they will say that a woman cannot do the job and resent her as a burden on them.

7. POWER STRUCTURE

One must recognize that a power structure exists in all walks of life. It is important to discern the power structure and to learn to use it effectively. Knowing the power structure enables a person to function more efficiently.

A. TOWN GOVERNMENT

Howard J. Lloyd is the MLA for the Mackenzie area. He represents the Social Credit party and this is his first time in office. Frank Oberle is our federal member of parliament. He represents the Conservative Party. Both men have their main home office in Prince George.

The local government consists of a mayor and six aldermen who are elected in a municipal election. Voter turnout is about 39%. There are several citizen advisory groups and boards. Each group has a representative from council and that person reports directly to council.

Council meetings are open and advertised to the public. They meet every 1st and 3rd Monday of the month. Unfortunately, the public does not attend in even small numbers. Usually there is a reporter from the local newspaper, The Times, and one or two other people. Anyone can make a presentation to Council. Council seems to be receptive to citizen input and directs issues of concern to the citizen participation groups where appropriate, for their recommendations. The members of council are from all aspects of the community, except from women.

The people employed at the Municipal Office are helpful to anyone trying to find out anything or with a problem. In a small community it is easier to approach people with authority and everyone gets personal attention. There is none of the 'lost in the crowd' feeling.

B. INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

As you must realize by now, the major resource is lumber and the biggest company is B.C. Forest Products. In essence when people talk about the company they mean BCFP. It has a powerful effect on the citizens of Mackenzie. Generally it is a good company to work for. It has some social conscience but the main reason for its being in Mackenzie is to make money. So, if something is not to the company's advantage or profit it will not get their support. The company is interested in the growth of the community and allows all its employees to participate in the community. At one time (see Mackenzie Story, Citizens Committee of Mackenzie, by Trade Union Research Bureau, Vancouver, B.C.) BCFP really controlled the town but is trying to play a lesser role in the development now.

Just recently the district negotiated with BCFP for 'acquisition of the 1970 acres of BCFP residual lands from its original land' and that leaves the town freer to operate and plan on its own.

I would like to point out that there are no women on the Board of Directors or in the Officers or in any high management position in Mackenzie within the company.

C. UNION STRUCTURE

There are three main unions in Mackenzie, PPWC (Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada), IWA (International Woodworkers of America), and CPU (Canadian Pulpworkers Union). They affect the lumber industry and the community extensively.

Unions are very important to single resource towns like Mackenzie. Not too long ago there was a strike in Mackenzie and many people have still not recovered financially from that; many did not wait out the strike and left town. This year, 1977, is a negotiating year and everyone is concerned as to the direction the contract talks will take.

Unions may have a democratic structure but, as far as women's issues are concerned, they are disappointing. There are not many women in the unions here, and the women who do belong do not have a large say in what happens. The unions do stand behind their members so the first priority for women is to be hired by the company so that they can become members of the union. There is a story about how the union did help some women get hired on. A group of women applied

for work at the local mill and were not hired but they knew there were jobs available. They went to the Union and the Union put some pressure on the company with the result that some of the women got hired on. This tactic should be used again.

8. CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

This report attempts to give an idea of what it means for a woman to live in the town of Mackenzie. It is exciting to be a woman at a time when women can and should play an important part in economic development. Nowhere else do we have as much opportunity to achieve that goal than in the resource rich north. We must learn from the mistakes of past single resource developed towns and make use of new information gathered from women for future developments.

From a woman's perspective, life in a single industry town such as Mackenzie would be improved by implementing the following recommendations:

1. Employment opportunities at the major industry (mills) must be available for women.

2. Twenty-four daycare must be provided for shift workers.

3. There should be a child minding centre in operation in the town.

4. A multi-use community centre should be considered an integral part of the town plan.

5. This community centre should have a full time women's organizer/advisor to operate a women's centre out of the community centre.

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